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PHILADELPHIA, October 24, 1864. ⁴²

WM. A. ATKINSON, Esq.,

Chairman of the State Executive Committee, Dover.

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DEAR SIR: Permit me to thank you for the very complimentary terms in which you have been pleased to invite me to participate in the proceedings of a mass meeting for the State of Delaware, to be held at Dover, on Tuesday, the 25th inst., and, at the same time, to remind you that, whilst I have never made a political speech in my life, I have every disposition to assist in quieting the troubles that surround us, in restoring the integrity of our great country, and in defending a comrade in arms who has been most outrageously and unjustly persecuted.

With your permission, I will take advantage of this occasion to say a word to the good people of Delaware, who desire to know the truth, and, knowing it, will stand by the truth and the rights guaranteed to them by the laws of the land.

I need not advise the people assembled at Dover that the rights of all, whether under the laws of the States or of the United States, are plainly written and well understood; that unless there be a premeditated intention to violate these laws for some selfish purpose, there need be no collision of authorities; and if there could be a doubtful case of interference, the *animus* which controlled it would, if the purpose were honest and good, prevent any ill feeling and distrust. In the difficulties now assuming so threatening an aspect, we can trace neither "*military necessity*" nor possible excuse for the interference of the Administration with the State elections. That these can be regulated only by the laws of the States respectively is admitted by the President, in his letter of the 22d inst. addressed to W. B. Campbell, Bailie Peyton, Emerson Etheridge, and others, of Tennessee; he therein expressly asserts that his "conclusion is that" the President has "nothing to do with the matter." "By the Constitution and laws, the President is charged with no duties in the conduct of a Presidential election in any State."

In the late election in Maryland, the condition subsequent, imposed by the Government upon the voters of that State was a clear infringement of their rights—a clear, arbitrary, despotic usurpation of authority; and the declaration that the Constitution of that State has been changed at that election must be set aside whenever the subject shall be dispassionately reviewed by proper judicial authority. Among the many issues constantly made in a great commercial State, such as Maryland, this question cannot be avoided; and the Supreme Courts must decide the alleged result of the election unconstitutional and void. In all of these questions of collision between the Administration and the several States, the plea of military necessity will never warrant an assumption of State legislative power, or the substitution of the will of the President for the known fundamental law of the State. The candidates at the elections interfered with by military power in Delaware, Maryland, and Kentucky were all loyal men. The Constitution expressly provides that "no person shall be convicted of treason" (disloyalty) "unless on the testimony of two witnesses to the same overt act, or on confession in open court." This is the only authorized means of determining the loyalty or disloyalty of any person; hence, executive interference with the elections, and the imposition of extra-judicial oaths which, by every decision ever made, are not binding, and not punishable if broken, were arbitrary and despotic acts, which, if repeated, will plunge the country into a war of a far more fearful character than that which now deluges our country with blood.

Another subject which should claim especial interest with you is that of peace. And who is there in Delaware, and Maryland, and Kentucky, and Missouri, and in all the North, and in all the South, that does not pray and long for peace? And who is there North or South that does not want an *honorable peace*? Having become engaged in war, what is the object of

fighting except to obtain an honorable peace? Mr. Davis fights for the independence of the Confederate States; but many, and I believe a majority, of the Southern people would most gladly find themselves under the old flag and the old Constitution, if they could be permitted to save their honor and their record by coming back under any other than an Abolition ruler.

On the Northern side, Mr. Lincoln, without authority, fights for abolition; but many, and I believe a majority, a vast majority of the Northern people, would rejoice to find themselves under the old flag and the old Constitution, united with their old friends of the South; they would be only too glad to know that this dreadful war were over, and that peace, an honorable peace, once more bound us heart and hand, North and South, East and West, from Maine to Louisiana, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, as one people, both desirous of burying the implements of war, and each, in an embrace of the other brought about by intense suffering, eager to forget and forgive, and to offer up to Him, who uses all things for some great and good purpose, a prayer of promise for the future.

Now, my good friends, I know this can be done. General McClellan can and will say to the Southern people: We love our nationality better than our lives; it must not, it shall not be destroyed. He can say that he regrets, as all good people must regret, the wild fanaticism of bad men North and South. He can promise that all *unconstitutional* acts shall be ignored. He can entreat that bygones shall be bygones, and that in the adjustment of present difficulties the rights of all shall be respected and protected, leaving to the courts of the country to determine those rights whenever there is doubt concerning them. To accomplish this he can send properly authorized persons to Richmond, and if proper, honorable, legally authorized terms are accepted, as I am assured they will be, a *cessation of hostilities* can be ordered, and peace, an honorable peace, a glorious peace will follow, and the heart of every woman, and widowed mother, and orphaned child in the land, now weeping in mad despair, will be made glad. Thus will be stopped the waste of blood, which must otherwise increase, from the intensified bitterness and hatred unnecessarily and fiendishly thrown into the contest by wicked men.

In this connection, we may be permitted to mention that during June, of 1862, before the Seven Days' Fight, while endeavoring, under a flag of truce, to effect a cartel for the exchange of prisoners, Gen. McClellan instructed one of his staff officers to sound the Confederate officer upon the subject of a peaceful restoration of the Union. The proceedings of the conference were duly reported, and Gen. McClellan was severely reprimanded by the authorities at Washington.

Again, in Oct. and Sept. of 1863, before resorting to severe measures, the commanding General of the District of Virginia endeavored to establish some proper understanding with the people within his lines south of the James River, and between it and the Albemarle Sound, and so successful was he that a number of the people in North Carolina, outside of the lines, desired that their counties should be included within them. Finally, the reasonable protection thus offered was so influential that there was a strong probability of the State of North Carolina coming back into the Union; and an application was made through Mr. Chandler, member of Congress, for permission to open negotiations between the officer above named, and the authorities and citizens of that State, to the effect that North Carolina should no longer oppose the United States Government, but elect members of Congress, who would support it, and send them to Washington, leaving all issues of property to take their appropriate judicial course. I need hardly advise you now that this application was refused at Washington, unless upon the ground of an acceptance of the Proclamation of the Emancipation made by the President, and that the whole country was shocked when he proclaimed that the war should go on until terms, unauthorized by law, and which involve the whole industrial existence

of the South, should first be conceded by the Southern people. And thus has Mr. Lincoln, for the *fourth or fifth time*, refused to permit any attempt at a reconstruction of the old Union, plainly indicating his purpose and that of his party to have no termination of the war short of an absolute extermination of the South, or a division of the country.

The people of the Eastern States are relieved of the heavy burthen of the war by the immense immigration which continually pours in from Europe. The Western people, on the contrary, have no such relief, but have most manfully and patriotically responded to every call, until they necessarily feel the effects of the exhaustion already carried to such an extent, that many of their farms are abandoned, and those that are not abandoned, are only worked by the old men and women. Under such circumstances, little does it become the Eastern States to attempt to cast opprobrium upon their Western friends because they want peace upon proper and constitutional terms.

The army of the Potomac, after a loss of over 140,000 men, will winter before Richmond, and we may well conclude that we want no more slaughter from the experiments of the President, and that whilst we are willing to shed our blood freely for the restoration of the Union, we will not consent to the loss of a drop of it after that object can be attained.

The expeditions to the Red River have been unsuccessful; Missouri is overrun; the Mississippi River is of no use; and we may well fear that the Army of the Cumberland will winter in Tennessee.

Whilst referring to the army let us all shed a tear of sympathy with the families of the hundreds of thousands of brave men, who have, with a patriotism now only to be found among the less favored of our country, devotedly sacrificed their lives, in the terrible contest that, unless soon stayed, may terminate in the destruction of the most happy people that ever lived.

With the experience of the past four years before us, how can we expect to succeed? Our armies have been fought by politicians, not soldiers. The councils of the nation have been directed by a cabinet, the members of which were so hostile to each other that the President feared to bring them together, lest there should be personal collision among them; and the Secretary of War has studiously offended, in the most brutal manner, every officer of the army that has come in contact with him. The rule of promotion now is that a Brigadier shall promise to sanction the legal and illegal proclamations of the President, and that, in addition, every officer of a superior rank shall promise some confidential friend of the President—*unknown to the latter*—that the said officer will not become a candidate for the presidency.

In a letter dated September 27th ult., I asserted that a prominent command had been offered by the President to Gen. McClellan, but that it was coupled with dishonorable terms; that prior to this similar terms had been offered by letter. Immediately after the publication of the above, an article appeared in one of the Washington papers, of which the following is an extract:—

“GENERAL NAGLEE’S LETTER—ONE OF HIS STATEMENTS ABOUT PRESIDENT LINCOLN AUTHORITATIVELY DENIED.

[From the National Republican (Official), Oct. 3.]

“We are authorized to say that the President has no recollection of sending any message or messenger to General McClellan, or of receiving any from him, at any time since he was relieved of the command of the Army of the Potomac, and certainly none such as mentioned in the published letter of General Naglee. If the President sent a message in writing, the writing can be produced; if a messenger, he can be named. Let either be done, if it can.”

On the 5th of October, a letter was published over the signature of F. P. Blair, in which he admits that he mentioned to Mr. Lincoln the attempt he,

Mr. Blair, had made at "the conciliation of parties in New York, with a view to defeat the opposition in the North." My object in referring to it again is merely to add that, since the publication of Mr. Blair's letter, I have been informed that he would not consent to the publication of the correspondence held with the friends of Gen. McClellan, but said he considered it confidential. We will be governed accordingly, satisfied to leave the question of veracity between all parties concerned for the decision of the public.

Are we willing to admit that the American people have become so demoralized that they will accept constant, studied falsification in lieu of truth, and this, too, at a time when our very existence as a nation is at stake, and when thousands and tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of our friends are being slaughtered without compensative military results?—these frightful losses being frequently made by most incompetent leaders, and justified upon the grounds of experiment? This is a time, of all others, when we want truth, not falsehood; this is a time when we want competency, not inefficiency; when we want decency, not vulgarity; and, above all, when we should insist that good solid common sense, and honesty and dignity of character should become the rule of conduct, not alone of the lower, but of the highest servants of the people.

The most outrageous abuse and falsehood have been heaped upon the head of Gen. McClellan, because, when most unjustly driven from the army, he dared to be an aspirant for the Presidency. But all that has been said against him has been said in vain; his record has become the sacred record of the country, and has been indelibly written upon too many fields of battle, and his sentiments are impressed upon too many hearts that beat in unison with his, to be effaced by any slander that may be uttered at this late day. The hirelings of the press may issue their columns of vile falsehood, and lying politicians may belch forth the biddings of their vulgar master, but, rely upon it, "truth is mighty, and will prevail."

All that is said and all that is written against Gen. McClellan may cloud his fair fame for a day, but the future will disperse the passion and evil of the hour in which we live, and justice and truth will illumine the wreath upon the brow where it properly belongs.

The people of the United States are now engaged in one of the most dreadful wars that have ever occurred. The people of the North are arrayed politically against each other with more animosity than has ever been exhibited since the existence of our country. There are acknowledged inefficiencies and acknowledged usurpation attempted to be justified on the plea of military necessity in States where civil authority and law only should exist. All can perceive a most extraordinary misdirection and waste of the resources of the country. The most responsible military positions have been filled by unscrupulous politicians, which has resulted in the most direful disaster; and there has been so systematic a falsification of the truth by the Administration and the press that intelligent people find it impossible to ascertain the progress and true history of military and political events. All of those that have had sufficient spirit and determination to express a preference opposed to the Administration have been classed with those who are in open rebellion, and where they have been officers of the army they have been dropped from the rolls. And it is proclaimed by the friends of the Administration that, if necessary, the present incumbent will hold the Presidency by fraud and force.

We demand a fair election, and we further demand that if George B. McClellan is elected, Abraham Lincoln shall peaceably or by force yield to him the executive chair.

Again thanking you for your very kind and friendly invitation to visit Dover, I am,

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

HENRY M. NAGLEE.





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